

Article

Alexander Grechaninov and the Viola

Artamonova, Elena

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Alexander GRECHANINOV

Complete Music for Viola and Piano

Sonatas No. 1 and 2,
Opp. 161 and 172

Early Morning: Suite, Op. 126b

In modo antico: Suite, Op. 81

DEBUSSY
transcr. GRECHANINOV

Romance

Beau Soir

Elena Artamonova, viola
Nicholas Walker, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS

ALEXANDER GRECHANINOV AND THE VIOLA

by Elena Artamonova

Alexander Tikhonovich Grechaninov (1864–1956) is well known as a composer of orchestral and choral works with strong emphasis on Russian Orthodox and folk traditions. His compositions and transcriptions for the viola have been completely unknown until recently.

By the middle of the twentieth century Grechaninov was one of the last living composers directly linked to the Russian National School formed in the second half of the nineteenth.¹ During his more than three decades of exile, first in Paris from 1925, then in Detroit from 1939 and finally in New York from 1940, Grechaninov preserved his spiritual connection with Russian musical culture, its traditional chants and folksongs. This bond had begun to take shape in his early childhood in Moscow, in the atmosphere of his deeply religious Russian Orthodox family, which went on frequent pilgrimages, and his singing experience in the local church choir, and then developed further from his collaboration with Rimsky-Korsakov, Safonov, Taneyev and Smolensky.² Grechaninov acknowledged in his memoirs³ that an awareness of his Russian upbringing became especially valuable in his compositional and public activities during his years in exile.

Grechaninov's path to professional music was an unorthodox one. Until he was fourteen, his instrumental musical knowledge was confined to the orchestrion, a machine that played popular tunes using a music-roll containing up to twenty songs, and the guitar, which the twelve-year-old Alexander bought with the two-month allowance intended to pay for his breakfasts at Moscow Gymnasium No. 5. In 1878 a piano was bought for Grechaninov's younger sister, but it was Alexander who could not be pulled away from the instrument, playing melodies from the *Ektenia* ('Litany'), such as 'Gospodi pomilui' ('Lord, have mercy'), that he knew

¹ Rachmaninov died in 1943 and Medtner in 1951.

² Of these names, that of Stepan Vasil'yevich Smolensky (1848–1909) is likely to be least familiar to western readers. As teacher (from 1889 to 1901 Director of the Moscow Synodal School of Church Singing and professor of Russian church singing at the Moscow Conservatory, Director of the Imperial Court Chapel in St Petersburg from 1901 to 1903, and founder, in 1907, of the Precentors' School in St Petersburg), writer, musicologist and composer, he was a major figure in Russian church music.

³ First published privately in Paris in 1934 as *Moia muzykal'naiia zhizn* ('My Musical Life') and then in New York in 1951 as *Moia zhizn* ('My Life'); English edn. *My Life*, transl. Nicolas Slonimsky, Coleman-Ross, New York, 1952; Russian edn., *Moia Zhizn*, ed. Vladislav Chernushenko, St Petersburg Pushkin Society/Capella of St Petersburg, St Petersburg, 2009, p. 159. Dictionary entries apart, there are hardly any other published sources on Grechaninov in English.

from the weekly church liturgy. Getting only occasional help from his sister-in-law, a piano student at the Moscow Conservatoire, Grechaninov was virtually self-taught as a musician until the age of seventeen, when he was himself admitted on a semi-scholarship to the Conservatoire. His father, a successful but half-literate merchant, opposed his career in music: he wanted his younger son to take over the family firm or at least to become a doctor, the only other profession he acknowledged with respect, and so he pitilessly discontinued his son's financial support. It was only his mother's savings and then, when the family business went bankrupt, his own earnings as a private music-teacher that from 1881 to 1890 allowed Grechaninov to fund his studies at the Conservatoire. He became a piano student of Nikolai Kashkin (a close friend of Nikolai Rubinstein, the founder of the Conservatoire) and Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and soon showed steady progress, covering the two-and-a-half-year curriculum in his first year. He nonetheless felt he was underestimated by his classmates and teachers, most of whom perceived him as a student of moderate abilities. The turning point came with the recommendation of Vasily Safonov, Grechaninov's next piano professor, that he switched from the performance faculty to the composition faculty in 1887–88. Grechaninov thoroughly enjoyed his classes with Sergei Taneyev, with whom he kept in close contact until Taneyev's death in 1915, and left deeply appreciative memoirs about his former professor (written in January 1916 but still unpublished).⁴ But the unconstructive criticism (as Grechaninov saw it) and monotonous pedagogy of another teacher, Anton Arensky, who did not recognise Grechaninov's musical inspiration and compositional talent, resulted in a major conflict between them in January 1890.⁵ Grechaninov left the Conservatoire in Moscow, despite the support of Safonov, the Director at the time, and in autumn 1890 he enrolled on a course of composition under Rimsky-Korsakov at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. He was awarded a scholarship by the Russian Musical Society that fully funded his studies there in 1890–93.

By this stage Grechaninov had gained recognition as an inspirational music- and piano-teacher with a growing network of private students, among them the future composers, pianists and musicologists Sergei Vasilenko, Alexander Shenshin, Alexei Stanchinsky and Pavel Lamm. But his achievements as a composer were still moderate, consisting of three cantatas, works for a *cappella* chorus, a few published but insignificant romances for voice and piano and an orchestral *Elegy in Memory of Tchaikovsky* (1893) premiered by Rimsky-Korsakov on 31 December 1898 but later destroyed by Grechaninov in disappointment. The vibrant concert-life of and study at the first two Russian conservatoires had a major impact on Grechaninov's musical tastes, bringing together the competing artistic trends of the academics and romantic nationalists of Moscow and St Petersburg. He admired the brothers Rubinstein, Anton and Nikolai, Taneyev and Tchaikovsky, and also the composers of the

⁴ Grechaninov's archives in Russia, including his letters and cards to Taneyev, and his memoirs of Taneyev are now kept in The Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (RGAL) and The Glinka National Museum Consortium of Musical Culture (GNMCMC) in Moscow, and at The Tchaikovsky State House Museum (GDMC) in Klin.

⁵ Among Arensky's other students were Reinhold Glière, Georgy Conius and Rachmaninov, who all left appreciative memoirs of their composition teacher. Alexander Scriabin, though, also had a major clash with him and so never completed his compositional course at the Conservatoire, graduating only with a gold medal as a pianist.

‘Mighty Handful’ and the Belayev circles. But it was Rimsky-Korsakov who became the most influential figure, enthusiastically promoting Grechaninov’s works and so boosting his early career. Grechaninov valued his former professor’s guidance and friendship, and kept up an active correspondence with him until Rimsky-Korsakov’s death in 1908.

His first real success came in 1894–95 with the prize-winning String Quartet, Op. 2 (the first of four), and the premiere of his First Symphony, Op. 6, where the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and the other members of the ‘Mighty Handful’ was clearly to be heard. Works of various genres and stylistic inflections followed, gradually showing more independence and distinctiveness in his language, and winning recognition from his colleagues – including Arensky, who changed his mind about his former student. Among these works were the operas *Dobrynia Nikitich*, Op. 22 (1901), and *Sestra Beatrisa*, Op. 50 (1908–10), after Maurice Maeterlinck’s symbolist play *Sœur Béatrice*; Symphony No. 2, Op. 27 (1909), Piano Trio No. 1, Op. 38 (1906), a cello concerto, Op. 8 (1895),⁶ pieces for piano, oboe, flute and violin, and four sets of incidental music for the Moscow Art Theatre founded in 1898 by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, including *Snegurochka* (‘The Snow Maiden’), Op. 23, 1900, commissioned by Stanislavsky. But it was Grechaninov’s liturgical and secular choral and solo-vocal compositions, including his *Liturgies of St John Chrysostom* No. 1, Op. 13 (1897), and No. 2, Op. 29 (1903), and numerous romances for voice and piano that won him admiration and popularity among the general public. His collaboration and friendship with Stepan Smolensky from 1897, the researcher of Russian *znamennyi* chant⁷ and director of the Moscow Synodal Choir, contributed to the establishment of his international fame as Smolensky performed his choral music on concert tours abroad from 1899. Grechaninov also continued his successful teaching practice in Moscow, including positions at the music schools of the sisters Gnëssin from 1903⁸ and of Tamara Berkman;⁹ he taught also throughout his life in exile. This pedagogical interest is represented in his many

⁶ The performance history of this concerto is unusual. Grechaninov states in his memoirs (*Moia zhizn'*, p. 74) that he completed the work near the town of Rybinsk during a holiday on the river Volga in 1895. Two years later, when he played it on the piano with Alfred von Glenn, professor of cello at the Moscow Conservatoire, he found the work unsatisfactory and left it unperformed and unpublished. It was premiered and recorded only a century later, by Alexander Ivashkin and the Russian State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Polyansky (Chandos CHAN 9559, released in 1996).

⁷ *Znamennyi* chant is the melismatic unison liturgical singing used in the Russian Orthodox Church until the reforms of Patriarch Nikon in the mid-seventeenth century. These reforms introduced a polyphonic style of singing influenced by the West (Poland, Germany and Italy in particular), and brought in the modern five-line staff notation in place of the symbols – called *kriuki* or *znamena* – developed from Byzantine neumatic notation, in which each sign had a name and a spiritual symbol. Today, this singing practice continues only in the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church.

⁸ The Gnëssin College (it later expanded, also founding a new Institute in 1944 and two schools in 1946) was established in Moscow in 1895 by the three daughters of a Rostov rabbi, Evgenia, Elena and Maria; their composer brother Mikhail later joined the staff, too.

⁹ This specialist music school was founded in 1919 (renamed in 1971 as the Music School Named after Vano Muradeli) and is thus one of the oldest music schools in Moscow. Many leading professors of the Moscow Conservatoire taught and gave master-classes here, including Mikhail Terian (viola), Vera Dulova (harp), Georgy Bezrukov (violin) and Mstislav Rostropovich (cello).

fine instrumental and vocal compositions for children, including three operas – *Elochkin son* ('The Dream of the Christmas Tree'), Op. 55 (1911), *Kot, petukh i lisa* ('Cat, Rooster and Fox'), Op. 103 (1924), *Mishkin teremok* ('The Little Mouse's Hut'), Op. 92 (1921), after a Russian fairy tale, and the cycle *Early Morning* recorded on this CD.

Another important influence on Grechaninov's compositional language was his research into and arrangements of folksong at the Musical Ethnographic Commission at Moscow University, founded in 1901. His interest in folk-music ranged from Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Tatar and Bashkir songs to Slovak and Scottish tunes, which found their way into his compositions (in, for example, the *15 Bashkir Melodies*, Op. 28 (1902), for flute (or oboe) and piano, and the Burns settings of the *Scottish Songs*, Op. 49 (1909), for voice and piano), including his sonatas for clarinet and piano, of which more below. Grechaninov's final tally of compositions was over 200 in number, half written in Russia and the other half abroad. They include six operas, seven sets of incidental music, five symphonies, a number of shorter orchestral works (including a *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*, Op. 147 (1940), and the symphonic poem (with chorus) *Vers la victoire* (1941–43)) concertos for violin, cello and flute, eight cantatas, four liturgies, five masses, more than sixty choral pieces and over 130 other vocal works, chamber and instrumental music, including some sixty works for piano, four string quartets, two sonatas for violin and piano, even two sonatas for balalaika and piano.

Keeping abreast with modern innovations¹⁰ and, at the same time, being an adherent of the national idioms reflected in his use of Russian melody and traditional methods of harmonising it, Grechaninov created a style that was original in its expressive language and masterly in its execution. His natural fluency in vocal music was extended to his instrumental works, resulting in a special emphasis on the singing nature of each instrument. Writing five years before his death, Grechaninov provided a perceptive assessment of his own musical language:

In my instrumental music, especially of the late period, one can find many samples of modern style. Nevertheless, how long are we going to talk about modernism and traditionalism of a musical language? [...] There was too much attention paid to the value of a musical language, whereas the most important in our field of arts is something completely different: the most imperative is the feeling and mood that the composer feels when he writes a musical work. If he managed to communicate his mood to a performer and listener, then this is his blessing: he can say to himself when he is about to depart this world: I have fulfilled my life on earth. Will I be able to say this when my time shall come?¹¹

It is an aspiration he did indeed fulfil.

¹⁰ In the period 1907–15 he responded strongly to French impressionism and to symbolism, in his setting of texts by Charles Baudelaire, Andrei Beluy and Vyacheslav Ivanov (respectively, his Opp. 48, 64 and 74) and the opera *Sestra Beatrisa*, Op. 50, after Maurice Maeterlinck.

¹¹ *Moia zhizn*, Chernushenko edn., *op. cit.*, pp. 175–76.

Grechaninov's viola works, several of them newly discovered, enhance the concert repertoire of an instrument that too often plays poor cousin to the violin and cello. The Sonata for Viola (or Clarinet) and Piano, Op. 161, unpublished and thus virtually unknown, was written during 1935–40, when Grechaninov was in his mid-seventies. It was premiered only on 2 December 2013 by myself and Nicholas Walker at the Centre for Russian Music, Deptford Town Hall, London, and is recorded for the first time on this CD. Some publications list the work only as a sonata for clarinet and piano, although Grechaninov wrote a part for the viola as well as one for the clarinet. This piece inhabits the soundworld to which the composer remained true throughout his life, despite the adverse circumstances in which it was composed: as well as the grim repercussions of external events, Grechaninov had to cope with failing eyesight. The musical language of the sonata is based on vocal melodic expressions, in particular in the second-movement *Canzona* [2], which brings reminiscences of a Russian romance from the turn of the twentieth century, with the intimate lyricism, quasi-impressionist and narrative qualities that became characteristic of Grechaninov's mature writing. They require special emphasis on timbre and sound, whereas the virtuoso elements of the first and last movements demand technical flexibility. The sonata-form first movement [1] starts with a playful theme in B flat major, followed by a contrasting lyrical theme in D minor. Grechaninov breaks their material down into short motifs, changes their keys and articulation from *legato* to *staccato* and adds scalar and chromatic passages. This approach is developed with more intensity in the *Vivace* finale [3] with an ostinato element that starts in the piano part and then interacts with the viola throughout the movement. The harmonic idiom is Grechaninov's only – moderate – compromise in favour of modernism, in its unexpected modulations, passing dissonant notes, alternated chords and persistent chromatic runs. These features Grechaninov broadly explored in his other sonata, too.

The Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 172 (1943), dedicated to Simeon Bellison,¹² has been in the clarinet repertoire since its first publication in 1949.¹³ My viola edition – taking its cue from Grechaninov's own treatment of the Op. 161 Sonata – makes adjustments of articulation and register to the clarinet version to render the technical and expressive challenges of this work more suitable for a stringed instrument. The Sonata consists of two movements: a *Moderato* and an *Andantino* with six variations and coda; throughout the work the role of both instruments is in equilibrium. The *Moderato* [4] is a virtuosic movement in F major with continuous chromatic runs, unexpected modulations and distinctive dotted rhythms in an uninterrupted dialogue between the two instruments. Its theme has a characteristic intervallic element of a perfect fourth which is retained throughout

¹² Simeon Bellison (1881–1953), a Moscow native, was a Russian-American clarinet virtuoso of Jewish descent who graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire in 1901. He toured Europe, Russia and the Far East with numerous chamber groups of his own foundation, and was from 1915 the first clarinetist with the orchestra of the St Petersburg Imperial Opera. In 1920 Bellison was appointed first clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the position he held until his retirement in 1948. He arranged numerous works for the clarinet and established a respected teaching studio in New York.

¹³ It was republished by Muzyka, Moscow, in 1966 and has been recently recorded on the clarinet by Ivan Stolbov and Kim Ja Ran, piano (Melodiya MELCD1002152, released in 2014).

the movement and exercised in different keys. The second-movement variations are the heart of the work. The distinctive feature of the theme [5] is its use of Slavic, possibly Belorussian, folksong. It is written in a binary form in the parallel F minor with a constant metric modulation from 7/8 to 3/4 that unsettles its agogics and breaks it into short phrases. It also retains the perfect fourth from the first movement, but the implementation of augmented seconds in a harmonic minor brings an eastern flavour to the melodic expression. The variations which follow are technically very demanding for both players, especially the piano-solo Variation II [7] with its incessant forceful passages and Variation IV [9], which finishes with a big, virtuosic cadenza for the viola. In Variations I [6] and III [8] Grechaninov completely alters the metre and rhythm of the theme, alters its key with added chromatic runs; in Variation IV it changes character to suggest a Russian *rozhok* (an ancient wooden instrument, similar to a cornett), adds fugato elements in Variation V [10] and enhances it with *grazioso* dancing elements in 9/8 in Variation VI [11]. The *Vivace* Coda [12] is a toccata which starts in the piano part and then continues in the viola. It transforms the theme with ascending chromatic passages which suddenly change the key back to F major, as in the first movement.

The two transcriptions for viola (or cello) and piano of Debussy songs – ‘L’âme évaporée’ (the first of the *Deux Romances de Paul Bourget* of 1885) and *Beau Soir* (a setting of Théodore de Banville from 1891) – underline Grechaninov’s ability to transfer a vocal line into an instrumental one. He retains the melodic lines of the originals, balancing them with the rich, velvety and tender expressive qualities of the viola. These transcriptions were published in 1946 by the International Music Company in New York, but they have not had much exposure since then and are recorded here for the first time.

The cycle of ten pieces called *Rannim utrom* (‘Early Morning’), Op. 126b, originally written in 1930 in France for cello (or violin) and piano, continues the tradition of writing for children familiar from Schumann’s *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68 (1848), and recalls the images and narrative qualities of Tchaikovsky’s *Children’s Album*, Op. 39 (1878), and Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874). Grechaninov’s pieces vary in metre, tempo, character, mode and harmonic application, and combine dance miniatures, children’s games and adolescent fantasies with skill and humour. The Russian element almost always remains in the background, and though the distinctive rhythmic structures of the melodies often have the repeated notes and phrases typical of Russian folk-tunes, none of the pieces in the cycle has a Russian title. The cycle was first published in 1931 by Schott, Mainz. Since then, it has been republished and arranged for the viola by Sabine Stegmüller¹⁴ and is beginning to furnish teaching pieces. This is its first recording on the viola.¹⁵

The suite *In modo antico*, Op. 81, was originally written in 1918 for violin and orchestra (or piano) and performed for the first time in Petrograd in February 1921 by the violinist N. I. Kranz¹⁶ with the composer at the

¹⁴ ED 8757, Schott Music, Mainz, 1999.

¹⁵ Recorded by Bent Larsen, flute, and Sverre Larsen, piano (in *Russian Flute*, Classico B00000J2RK released in 1999).

¹⁶ Very little information, including a single photo in RGALI (FUND 2430, op. 1, ED. KHR. 179), has survived in Russian archives

piano, but since then it has not been seen in concert programmes, even though it was published by Gutheil in Moscow in 1918.¹⁷ Why did Grechaninov approach this innocent world of stylised dances and tender melodies in the most brutal post-revolutionary year of the Russian Civil War? Perhaps it was an attempt to escape from the realities of everyday life – he was, after all, no friend of the Revolution, later writing: ‘The Bolsheviks won. A beggar’s life has started, full of hardship. One cannot call this period of our ill-fated existence a life’.¹⁸ This unjustly forgotten suite is one of his first chamber works for an instrumental duo. Its title and movements recall Bach’s cello suites and point to the Neo-Baroque style just beginning to be heard in the music of Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Hindemith. Nevertheless, Grechaninov found his own way forward (and back) in this suite: the combination of dances of a fast, energetic nature as in the Sarabande [26], Gavotte [27] and Jig [29] often become technically very demanding for the soloist, with cadenzas and solo episodes of a romantic temperament, as in the Prelude [25]; the slow, intimate cantilena of the Aria [28] is a fine example of Grechaninov’s style. My arrangement for viola makes only occasional adjustments to the registers and phrasing of the violin version and thus preserves the original notation of the work.

Why did these works, in particular those written abroad, such as the Op. 161 Sonata, remain unknown for so long? There are two possible answers. First, Grechaninov clearly did not find a suitable violist to perform this music; and although the clarinet version of Op. 161 was recorded in his lifetime, in 1953,¹⁹ even it remains unpublished, confirming Grechaninov’s complaint in his memoirs that he struggled to get any of his works published in the USA.²⁰ Later he had to contend with deteriorating health and a language barrier – he spoke French but no English – which can hardly have helped him search for performers and publishers in America. The other answer is political. Grechaninov left Soviet Russia at the age of 61 in 1925. In the Soviet society such people were regarded as traitors. He did manage to preserve links with some of his former colleagues, such as Reinhold Glière and Dmitri Rogal-Levitsky, and a selective list of his vocal and chamber works as well as symphonies, mainly those of the pre-Revolutionary period, was published in the USSR. But the concert in honour of his 80th

about N. I. Kranz (even his full name has not yet been documented), who in 1901 was appointed second violinist of the Russian string quartet named after Count Meklenburg-Strelitsky based in St Petersburg. According to the short history of the quartet and its players written by Cesar Cui, ‘G. G. Meklenburg-Strelitskii i strunnyi kvartet ego imeni’ (‘Count Meklenburg-Strelitskii and the Quartet named after him’), published in Petrograd in 1915, Kranz was born in 1880 in Vilno (Vilnius) and studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire under Leopold Auer. This fact alone suggests that Kranz must have been a fine violinist: only the most talented students were granted the privilege of studying with Auer.

¹⁷ It was republished by Muzgiz, Moscow, in 1920 and by Muzyka, also in Moscow, in 2010. The version for violin and orchestra is available from Boosey & Hawkes.

¹⁸ *Moia zhizn, op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁹ Re-released in *The Simeon Bellison Clarinet Legacy*, Simeon Bellison, clarinet, and Nadia Reisenberg, piano (Tantara Records, B003VLDE9E, 2010).

²⁰ Lidia Nelidova-Fiveiskaya, ‘Poslednie gody’ (‘Last Years’), in *Moia zhizn, op. cit.*, p. 183.

birthday, held at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire on 25 October 1944, was no personal tribute; rather, it was a political gesture intended to demonstrate that Russians around the globe were united in their fight against the enemy in the Great Patriotic War. Once victory had been achieved, such 'heroes' were no longer welcome.

Five years before his death Grechaninov expressed a deep desire to return to Russia and to be buried in the grounds of the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow, the burial site of those Russians whose names belong to national and world history.²¹ But he never returned to Moscow, finding his final resting place in St Vladimir's Cemetery in Jackson, New Jersey. Now his music is coming back. In recent years there has been a revival of interest in his liturgical, choral and educational works in Russia, though a number of his compositions, in particular those that were written abroad, require further research before they can be performed. Political systems come and go, but Grechaninov's viola music testifies to the cultural values and historical legacy of the Russia to which he remained faithful throughout his life.

Elena Artamonova was born in Moscow, where she received her music education at the Gnssin Music College with Ludmila Vernigora and at the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire with Yuri Bashmet, gaining her diplomas with distinction in 1993 and 1998. As a postgraduate, she continued her studies with Martin Outram of the Maggini Quartet, followed by tuition from Nobuko Imai in Amsterdam and Geneva, Tabea Zimmermann in Berlin and David Takeno in London. She has won several prizes, including the British Reserve String Prize, Michael Stucky Trust award, the Associateship of the Royal College of Music with Honours and Fellowship of the London College of Music, subsequently becoming Musician in Residence and Head of Strings at Rannoch School, Scotland, in 2000. Since moving back to England a few years ago, Elena has enjoyed a career as a performer and string coach.



In 2003–4, commissioned by Comus Edition, Elena translated from the Russian a book on the history of the viola by Stanislaw Poniatowski. This historical area has been a central interest for her for some years. In January 2014 she successfully completed her doctoral research on 'Unknown Twentieth Century Russian Music for Viola' at Goldsmith College, Centre for Russian Music, University of London, under the guidance of the late Alexander Ivashkin, studying at the central libraries and archives in Russia, Britain and the USA.

²¹ It contains, for example, the earthly remains of Bulgakov, Chekov, Eisenstein, Gogol, Mayakovsky, Prokofiev, Schnittke and Shostakovich.

Her recent engagements have included a series of research presentations at international conferences and recitals in the UK, collaborations with the American Viola Society in Dallas and Henle Verlag in Munich. She has performed at prestigious concert venues and international festivals as a soloist, chamber-musician and as a viola leader in the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Russia, the USA and South Korea.

Hailed by *The Evening Standard* as a 'prodigy, of awesome technical fluency backed by exceptional artistry', **Nicholas Walker** possesses a rare combination of talents combining sensitivity with 'the flair of a full scale virtuoso and a sparkling intelligence' (*BBC Music Magazine*). He studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where he won all the major awards for both piano and composition, and subsequently at the Moscow Conservatoire.

While still a student in Moscow, he won the First Newport International Piano Competition and has since played with many British orchestras, including the City of Birmingham and National Symphony Orchestras, the Royal Philharmonic, London Mozart Players, the London Festival and New Queen's Hall Orchestras, the Philharmonia and the BBC National Symphony Orchestra of Wales. As well as performing in all the major London concert halls, he has played in North and South America, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Scandinavia, Australia and Russia. He has recorded for ASV, BBC Radio 3, BMG Arte Nova, Chandos and Cirrus. In 2010 he organised the Balakirev Centenary concerts in London, and is currently recording Balakirev's complete piano music for Naxos, the first disc of which was released in June 2013. Equally at home in chamber music, he is sought after as an imaginative and sensitive accompanist.



The **Artamonova-Walker Duo** gave its first performance in April 2005 and since then has explored a fascinating, often undiscovered and diverse repertoire for viola and piano or harpsichord from Marais and Handel to Alexander Grechaninov and Alfred Schnittke. Their concert programmes, with special emphasis on the Russian heritage, have brought to light some remarkable arrangements by Vadim Borisovsky as well as little-known viola music by Anton Rubinstein, Sergei Vasilenko, Grigory Frid, Sulkhan Tsintsadze, Georg Kirkor and Sergei Slonimsky. Their CD of the first recording of complete viola works by Sergei Vasilenko on Toccata Classics, the fruit of Elena's archival investigations, was released in 2011; a reviewer for MusicWeb International described the disc (rocc 0127) as 'stylishly done' and the music as 'freshly inventive', singling out Elena Artamonova's booklet essay as 'well written, diligently referenced with footnotes and extending across 12 pages [...] the exact antithesis of the sort of perfunctory journalese to which some liner notes resort'.



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Recording Venue: Potton Hall, Suffolk
Producer: Jeremy Hayes
Engineer: Ben Connellan
Piano Technician: Graham Cooke
Viola: Yuri Malinovsky, Moscow, 1990
Piano: Steinway

This CD is released in commemoration of 150th anniversary of Grechaninov's birth and as a tribute to Professor Alexander Ivashkin (1948–2014), an outstanding musician and academic, whose exceptional understanding and inspiration guided my research into unknown Russian music. Elena Artamonova

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GRECHANINOV Complete Music for Viola and Piano

Viola Sonata No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 161

(1940)* **16:40**

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|--------------------------|------|
| [1] | I | <i>Allegro</i> | 5:46 |
| [2] | II | <i>Canzona – Andante</i> | 4:25 |
| [3] | III | <i>Finale – Vivace</i> | 6:29 |

Viola Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 172

(1943)** **14:12**

arr. Elena Artamonova

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|------|
| [4] | I | <i>Moderato</i> | 3:54 |
| [5] | II | <i>Variations: Theme – Andantino</i> | 1:00 |
| [6] | | <i>Variation I – Tempo I</i> | 0:54 |
| [7] | | <i>Variation II – Allegro</i> | 0:37 |
| [8] | | <i>Variation III – Andante</i> | 2:25 |
| [9] | | <i>Variation IV – Molto vivace</i> | 2:12 |
| [10] | | <i>Variation V – Andante</i> | 1:04 |
| [11] | | <i>Variation VI – Allegro grazioso</i> | 0:45 |
| [12] | | <i>Coda: Largo – Vivace</i> | 1:22 |

DEBUSSY trans. GRECHANINOV*

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| [13] | <i>Romance</i> | 1:59 |
| [14] | <i>Beau Soir</i> | 2:21 |

Early Morning, Op. 126b (1930)**

14:44

arr. Sabine Stegmüller

- | | | | |
|------|------|---|------|
| [15] | I | <i>Morning Stroll – Moderato</i> | 0:53 |
| [16] | II | <i>Homesickness – Andantino</i> | 1:19 |
| [17] | III | <i>The Joker – Allegretto grazioso</i> | 1:14 |
| [18] | IV | <i>In the Twilight – Andante</i> | 2:05 |
| [19] | V | <i>Little Horseman – Allegro</i> | 1:34 |
| [20] | VI | <i>On Winter's Eve – Andante</i> | 1:40 |
| [21] | VII | <i>Burlesque – Moderato –
Allegro non troppo</i> | 0:57 |
| [22] | VIII | <i>In a Fortress – Moderato</i> | 2:08 |
| [23] | IX | <i>Thieves and Policeman –
Sempre ben marcato</i> | 1:12 |
| [24] | X | <i>Waltz – Moderato, molto grazioso</i> | 1:42 |

In modo antico: Suite, Op. 81 (1918)**

16:26

arr. Elena Artamonova

- | | | | |
|------|-----|--|------|
| [25] | I | <i>Prelude – Con libertà – Andante</i> | 4:31 |
| [26] | II | <i>Sarabande – Allegro moderato</i> | 2:25 |
| [27] | III | <i>Gavotte – Allegro, sempre marcato</i> | 2:23 |
| [28] | IV | <i>Aria – Lento, ma non troppo</i> | 3:25 |
| [29] | V | <i>Jig – Vivace</i> | 3:43 |

TT 67:21

Elena Artamonova, viola

Nicholas Walker, piano

*FIRST RECORDINGS

**FIRST RECORDINGS IN THIS VERSION

Alexander Grechaninov saw much change in the course of his long life (1864–1956), fleeing Revolutionary Russia into exile, first in Paris and then the United States. A member of the second generation of nationalist composers – he was a student of Rimsky-Korsakov and Taneyev – he never abandoned an essentially Russian lyricism, as these attractive but largely unknown viola works make clear.



GRECHANINOV Complete Music for Viola and Piano

- | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Viola Sonata No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 161 (1940)* | 16:40 |
| 4 | Viola Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 172 (1943)**
arr. Elena Artamonova | 14:12 |
| | DEBUSSY trans. GRECHANINOV* | |
| 13 | <i>Romance</i> | 1:59 |
| 14 | <i>Beau Soir</i> | 2:21 |
| 15 | Early Morning, Op. 126b (1930)**
arr. Sabine Stegmüller | 14:44 |
| 25 | In modo antico: Suite, Op. 81 (1918)**
arr. Elena Artamonova | 16:26 |

Elena Artamonova, viola
Nicholas Walker, piano

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TOCCATA CLASSICS
16 Dalkeith Court,
Vincent Street,
London SW1P 4HH, UK

Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020
E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

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